



Committee and Date Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership 19 November 2013

Item 5

AONB PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITY UPDATE

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Summary

This paper provides members with a summary update of recent activity of the AONB Partnership staff team.

Recommendation

The Partnership is recommended to note the information provided and offer comments.

KEY AREAS OF PROGRESS IN 2013-14 TO DATE (April 2013 - present)

Take and co-ordinate action to conserve and enhance natural beauty, to promote wellbeing, enjoyment and understanding and to further sustainable development.
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- **Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme** – Delivery Phase under way from July with Joy Howells as Landscape Partnership Manager. New team of six in place from September. The Scheme is operating as an identifiably separate project, but part of the AONB team. Scheme launch event on 12 November. Meetings of Landscape Partnership Board and other groups. Contract let for 'Rescuing Rocks and Overgrown Relics' project, and work under way to let other major contracts. See <http://www.stiperstonesandcorndon.co.uk/>
- **LEADER** project claims and reporting virtually complete for 2009-13 programme (see attached paper 4). Hosted exchange visit for 'Growing Gastronomists' co-operation project on local food with Loir Valley, Estonia & Warwickshire LAGs. Application for Transition funding approved by Defra, with LEADER Co-ordinator contract extended. Discussions about future rounds of LEADER. Represented at National Conference on Cooperation.
- £24,160 allocated in **Sustainable Development Fund** grants to 12 projects for 2013-14 (see appendix), with additional funding from Jean Jackson Charitable Trust. Membership review of SDF Panel completed. Final claims and reports completed for 2012-13 projects, available at <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/looking-after/sdf/>.
- **Farming Project** – completed in July, with a total of 203 one to one farm advice contacts made. Final report and evaluation published. Work with 15 schools and 3 Farming Advocates. Children's book about farming in the Shropshire Hills published. New Uplands project being considered with Herefordshire.
- **Rivers Project**. Site works ongoing for SITA funded **River Clun Freshwater Pearl Mussel Project** two more riparian sites planned before March. £65k of additional funding secured from Natural England for catchment related work. Riparian habitat

management works in preparation for 5 additional sites. Catchment Project Assistant post extended. Wetland opportunity mapping and Highways sediment reports published. Pilot control project, survey and strategy work on Himalayan Balsam in the Clun Catchment. Meetings of Clun Catchment partnership and ongoing input to Teme Partnership, Clun Steering Group, Field Officers Group and Clun Nutrient Management Plan Group. The Rivers Project web pages are developing as a significant reference of information, and the public place where reports on the River Clun commissioned by Natural England are available <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/looking-after/projects/rivers/>.

- **Shuttles** service for 2013 completed with over 7,500 passenger journeys made between May and September, including new Castle Connect service from Ludlow.
- **Discover Local** project completed June 2013. New 'product profiles' available on website, illustrating products that rely on specific habitat conservation, see <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/looking-after/projects/discover-local/>.
- New SDF funded **Buy Local** project. 6 new business and one public event planned and 35 renewals or new members of the **Shropshire Hills Sustainable Business Scheme**.
- **Walking with Offa local delivery** 8 additional self-guided walk leaflets published. Events held for co-operation project. 6 guided walks enjoyed by over 60 people, including one wild swim in October which was fully booked with a reserve list. See <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/things-to-do/walking-with-offa/> and <http://www.shropshirewalking.co.uk/walking-with-offa/>
- **Walking with Offa co-operation project** Offa Hoppa bus promotion, seasonal marketing campaigns, new 'Irresistible Offa' map and 'Talking Walking' Conference well attended. Walking with Offa Conference planned for March. <https://www.facebook.com/WalkingWithOffa>
- **Walking for Wellbeing** Project completed June 2013. Committee in place for Shropshire Hills Walkers Are Welcome towns.
- **Promotion activity.** 23 press releases issued and continued output on social media. Reduced format Annual Review for 2012-13 published. Joint Shropshire Hills 2013 Events programme and visitor guide well distributed. Website updated. AONB display at a number of events including HF walking holidays AGM in Shrewsbury, Ludlow Green Fair and Newcastle Show
- **Proposed Clee Hill Heritage Project.** Substantial progress with project planning, involving a wide range of stakeholders. Well attended public event held. HLF visit mid-November. See <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/looking-after/projects/clee-hill-heritage-project/>
- **Advice and support** to a wide range of activities and projects, including Clee Hill Community Wildlife Group, Shropshire Outdoor Learning Organisations, Caring for God's Acre Veteran Yew Tree Initiative, Bettws History Group, Western Power undergrounding programme and Youthful Landscapes project.

<p>Develop policy and strategy for the area through the AONB Management Plan, and influence the policies and strategies of others.</p>

- **Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan** Close involvement with Shropshire Hills and Ludlow Destination Development Partnership. Licensing of new destination logo and improvements to consistency of text in websites and literature. Review of progress with Strategy actions. <http://www.shropshirehillstourismpartnership.org.uk/>

- Input to local authority and other **steering groups** (Local Nature Partnership Board, Biodiversity Partnership, and others). Engagement with Local Enterprise Partnership and input into EU funding Strategy.
- **Planning**. Submission on Site Allocations & Management of Development (SAMDev) Revised Preferred Options for Church Stretton, and 10 planning applications (see <http://www.shropshirehillsaonb.co.uk/looking-after/planning/planning-consultations/>).

Develop the AONB Partnership as an inclusive and effective organisation.

- Input to **National Association for AONBs**, through annual Conference and AGM, and 'Future Landscapes' development and collaboration programme. <http://www.landscapesforlife.org.uk/>
- Constitution drafted for **new Charitable body** linked to AONB Partnership. Development group formed and contract let for specialist advice.
- Completion of 2012-13 **accounts**, with addition made to reserves.

Support the involvement of the community in the management of the AONB (also a cross-cutting theme in some items above).

- Support and advice for a wide range of **community projects**.
- **Talks** to Parish Councils, schools and other interest groups.
- Developing a programme of **volunteer-led guided walks**. New system established and four volunteers recruited to date.
- John Muir Award programme with **schools** (education/activity programme themed on wild places), currently working with Norbury and Bishop's Castle primary schools.
- **Friends of the Shropshire Hills AONB** currently has 76 members (with some renewals pending). Friends social event to Bedstone College well attended.

List of Background Papers

Shropshire Hills AONB Management Plan.

The full 2013-14 Team work programme can be made available to members on request.

Human Rights Act Appraisal

The information in this report is compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.

Environmental Appraisal

The recommendation in this paper will contribute to the conservation of protected landscapes.

Risk Management Appraisal

Risk management has been appraised as part of the considerations of this report.

Community / Consultations Appraisal

The topics raised in this paper have been the subject of earlier consultations with Partnership members.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Projects supported by Sustainable development Fund 2013-14

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Name of Organisation	Name of project	Amount of grant	Planned total project value	Rate of grant
Four and Twenty Arts CIC	Sticks and Stuff Arts in the Landscape	£3,000	£13,308	22.5%
Rushbury C of E Primary School	Learning and Living Locally	£2,822	£5,645	50%
Knighton Tree Allotments Trust	Weir Cottage Wood	£2,580	£5,670	45.5%
Pentabus Theatre	Women in the Landscape Part II - Into the Hills	£1,500	£15,486	9.6%
South Shropshire Youth Forum	Clee Wild Adventure	£2,000	£4,550	43.9%
Church Stretton Area CIC	Shropshire Hills Visitor Email	£1,500	£2,080	72.1%
Clun Valley Walkers and Businesses	Clun Walkers are Welcome on line and on the ground	£1,000	£2,290	43.6%
Clun Green Man Festival Committee	The Green Man's 4 Seasons	£1,877	£2,620	71.6%
S Wheeler & Son	Building a self-contained Care Farm area	£3,000	£5,282	56.8%
Clee Hill Community Wildlife Group	Clee Hill Community Wildlife Group	£2,500	£3,628	68.9%
Hopesay Parish Council	Practical work to Arbor Tree - shredding	£1,000	£1,500	66.67%
Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership	Buy Local 2013-14	£1,380	£3,465	39.8%
TOTALS		£24,160	£65,525	36.8%